



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Countywide Master Plan Released for Public Comment: HarfordNEXT – A Master Plan for the Next Generation

BEL AIR, Md., (Feb. 8, 2016) - Aspiring to improve Harford County citizens' quality of life, County Executive Barry Glassman's administration published online today a first draft of the countywide master plan known as HarfordNEXT – A Master Plan for the Next Generation. The draft is a visionary document outlining broad goals, big ideas, and actionable recommendations to guide county planning decisions through the year 2040 on land use, transportation, environmental stewardship, agricultural and historic preservation, economic prosperity and healthy communities. Opportunities for public feedback include 24/7 access to an innovative online tool called "Open Comment", which allows users to comment on any line of the draft document and view comments made by others. A public meeting on HarfordNEXT will be held on Thursday, February 18, from 6 – 8 p.m. in the Chesapeake Dining Hall on the campus of Harford Community College.

"HarfordNEXT reflects a modern, flexible approach to planning that is written in plain English, making it easier for everyone to read and consider how the plan will touch their lives and the next generation," said County Executive Glassman.

In development since April 2015, the first draft of HarfordNEXT is a departure from previous master plans that were over 700 pages long and organized around separate "element plans" such as the Natural Resources Element Plan, Transportation Plan, and Priority Preservation Area Plan. HarfordNEXT unifies the separate elements into a cohesive, streamlined plan.

“Instead of asking citizens to fit their ideas into different element plans, we organized HarfordNEXT around six themes that reflect the comprehensive way people actually use public services and public spaces,” said Bradley F. Killian, director of Harford County Planning and Zoning. Each theme has an easy-to-follow format with a brief introduction followed by goals, principles and implementation strategies. Those themes are: Grow with Purpose, Economic Vitality, Environmental Stewardship, Preserving Our Heritage, Mobility and Connectivity and Promoting Healthy Communities. Images and infographics are used throughout the draft to highlight key features.

Big ideas introduced in the draft include holistic transportation planning that emphasizes livability over simple vehicle mobility. Other ideas include green infrastructure planning, a renewed emphasis on preservation, and so-called “form based” zoning that considers the design and operation of a proposed development.

Bringing the vision closer to home, HarfordNEXT divides the county into seven community planning areas to focus on unique opportunities to strengthen each of those communities. The seven areas are: Churchville/Creswell, Edgewood, Fallston, Greater Bel Air/Emmorton/Forest Hill, Greater Aberdeen/Bush River/Havre de Grace, Joppa/Joppatowne, and the Norther Tier.

The complete first draft of HarfordNEXT, along with a summary, called “HarfordNEXT At-A-Glance”, can be accessed via the county website at <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/660/HarfordNEXT>. A copy of the complete draft with the “Open Comment” feature can be found at <https://harfordcounty.opencomment.us/> Registered users of this feature can make comments and view comments made by others, all of which are flagged by a speech bubble appearing on any line of the document that has generated comments. Citizens may also email comments to P&ZHarfordNext@harfordcountymd.gov or call 410-879-2000. Comments are also welcome by mail to the Dept. of Planning & Zoning, 220 S. Main St., Bel Air, Md. 21014. For those without access to a computer, paper copies are now available at all 11 branches of Harford County Public Library.

Public comments on the first draft of HarfordNEXT will be accepted through March 23, for the final draft that will be presented in May for approval by the County Council. Master plan updates are required by the state at least every 10 years.

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